

Hamilton Field, Frame Building Type G
(Facility Nos. 640, 643, 645, 646, 649)
South leg of F Street
Novato
Marin County
California

HABS No. CA-2398-CU

HABS
CAL
21-NOVA,
ICU-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HAMILTON FIELD
Frame Building Type G
(Facility Nos. 640, 643, 645, 646, 649)

HABS
CAL
21-NOVA,
ICU-

HABS No. CA-2398-CU

Location: Hamilton Army Air Field
Novato, Marin County, California
Frame Building Type G (Airmen's Barracks)
Facility Nos. 640, 643, 645, 646, and 649 (South leg of F Street)

U.S.G.S.: Novato, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1954 (revised 1980)
Petaluma Point, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1959
UTM Coordinates: Zone 10; A: 542100/4213620; B: 544720/4212220;
C: 542760/4210650; D: 541040/4212600

Significance:

Buildings 640, 643, 645, 646, and 649 are considered significant for their association with Air Force history in northern California, and with World War II actions in the Pacific Theater. The WAF Hill barracks are so named because of the 1950s and 1960s occupation of this group by the Women's Air Force. The barracks are arranged around the crest of a hilltop with a central drive and cul-de-sac. Other buildings in this group are a mess hall and club, and an administration office. For the earlier airmen as well as the WAFs, this group of buildings functioned as a self-contained section of the base. Facility No. 646, modified with a sun deck, has a large kitchen and dining area and was used as a women's officer's club, the only one on base.

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) for a comprehensive Statement of Significance and individual report HABS No. CA-2398-A for a condensed Statement of Significance.

Description:

The two-story frame barracks buildings are rectilinear in shape and measure approximately 30 by 138 feet. They have low-pitched composition shingle gable roofs with louvered vents in the gable ends and overhanging eaves. Metal ventilators are located on the ridgelines. Siding is horizontal wood board, covered with asbestos shingles. The foundations are concrete or post on concrete pier. The primary entrances, on each end of the buildings, are accessed via a concrete stoop and stairway with two-inch-diameter metal pipe railings or two-inch by four-inch wood rails. Double entrance doors on each end of the buildings are solid-core wood with four lights and three recessed panels; lock sets are standard metal with exterior Von Duprien thumb latch locks, with interior round knobs and half-mortised hinges. Doors have metal panic bars on the interior. Windows are eight-over-eight-light double hung wood sash and are located on the first and second stories on each elevation. Exterior wood

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staircases provide access to second floors through solid-core wood doors with four lights over three recessed wood panels. Exterior fire ladders are located on each end of the buildings.

Originally the interior floor spaces of each building consisted of a large open barracks room on each floor. Some of the interior spaces have now been partitioned for use as smaller living quarters. Ceilings originally were open to the peak with exposed six-inch-square roof trusses supported by braces. These were later covered with gypsum board or suspended acoustical tile. Original interior walls were covered with gypsum board; composition wood paneling has been installed over the original in some hallways and rooms. Subflooring for the barracks is tongue and groove wood with eight-inch-square vinyl asphalt tile covering. Doors are solid-core wood with either three or five recessed panels. Wooden stairways, with non-skid treads, provide access to the second stories. They have two-inch-diameter aluminum "Speed Rail" hand rails. Heating systems consist of forced air gas heaters; all ductwork is exposed. Original lighting fixtures are of the "schoolhouse" type, with a canopy and suspended milk glass bowl shade. Replacement lights are industrial type open end double tube fluorescent fixtures mounted flush with the ceiling or suspended on rods or chains.

Latrines are located on each floor. They have ceramic tile floors, with one- by one-inch, one- by two-inch, and two by two-inch tiles. Wells are clad in four- by four-inch ceramic tile. Showers have four to six shower heads and tile walls and floor. A changing room with wood benches adjoins the shower area. Sinks are enameled cast iron wall-mounted, made by Standard; each has a mirror. There are four to six sinks in each barracks. Three to four Standard Sanitary Corp. Pacific toilets separated by wood stall partitions are located in each latrine; there are no urinals. There are also floor-mounted cast iron mop sinks in each latrine. Lighting fixtures are recessed chrome and glass.

The barracks buildings were modernized in 1954 with the installation of bedroom partitions, a mahogany chair rail, asphalt tile base and flooring, tileboard wainscoting, and exterior asbestos shingle siding. Barracks No. 646 has a 40-foot-long one-story extension on the south end with a flat roof and a wood deck railing around the roof; the roof acted as a sun deck. It is accessed through a wood panel door connecting to a large dining room and also has a separate entrance reached by a small stairway. The dining room is wood paneled. This building served as the women officer's club for the WAFs.

The barracks buildings are located on a flat site and an adjoining hill top. Concrete walkways surround the buildings and provide access to those on the hill. Historic plantings consist of poplar, acacia, and Osage orange trees, as well as pyracantha shrubs. According to informants, the rose bushes on WAF Hill were planted by members of the Women's Air Force when they occupied the barracks.

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Historical Context:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) and Section B in report HABS No. CA-2398-F.

All of these buildings, with the exception of Facility 640, were completed in August 1942 for a cost ranging from \$25,619.93 to \$32,440.43 and were intended as barracks. Facility 646 was an officer's quarters and mess; the other barracks were the enlisted men's housing with a central mess located on the hill for their use. Facility 640 was built in July 1944 and cost \$25,739.93. It served as a medical staff quarters. In the late 1940s all of these buildings became the core of the WAF division and remained in use by the WAFs until base closure in 1974. Remnants of a globe, with the letters "WAF" raised in wood, is prominently located in the first cul-de-sac and was a major identifying object for this self-contained unit.

Sources:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) and Section B in report HABS No. CA-2398-F.

See the project field record:

Facility No. 640, Airmen's Barracks: roll 4, exposures 5-6; roll 8, exposures 10-12; roll 21, exposures 1-3

Facility No. 643, Airmen's Barracks: roll 10, exposures 1-3, 7-9; roll 13, exposures 1-3; roll 20, exposures 10-12; roll 72, exposures 5-6

Facility No. 645, Airmen's Barracks: roll 13, exposures 10-12; roll 21, exposures 4-6; roll 72, exposures 3-4

Facility No. 646, Airmen's Barracks: roll 12, exposures 4-12; roll 13, exposures 7-9; roll 67, exposures 10-12; roll 68, exposures 1-12; roll 69, exposures 1-12; roll 72, exposures 9-10

Facility No. 649, Airmen's Barracks: roll 21, exposures 7-9; roll 30, exposures 4-9; roll 72, exposures 1-2

The line drawn sketches were drafted on site in 1994 by Keith Syda, scanned into a computer and drawn by Christopher MacDonald in 1995, and corrected and finalized by Claire Warshaw in 1996 (all PAR Environmental Services, Inc. staff).

Project Information:

Hamilton Army Air Field is owned by various federal entities including the Department of the Navy, Department of the Army, United States Coast Guard, and General Services Administration (GSA). The Army/GSA parcels are being excessed and sold to private developers. The Navy property is included in Base Closure and Realignment actions.

As part of the Army's undertaking, it has been determined in consultation with the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) that the excess sale will have an affect on properties at the air field, and that these properties are components of a district that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Based on consultation with the OHP and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, pursuant to 36 CFR part 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f), a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was entered into by the interested parties in March 1994. The agreement stipulated that prior to excess sale the Army must contact the HABS/HAER division at the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service, San Francisco, California, to determine the appropriate level and kind of recordation for the subject properties. The MOA further stipulated that copies of the documentation be made available to the OHP and appropriate local archives designated by the OHP. This recordation has been prepared in order to meet those stipulations.

Text prepared by: Mary L. Maniery/Judith Marvin

Title: Historian/Architectural Historian

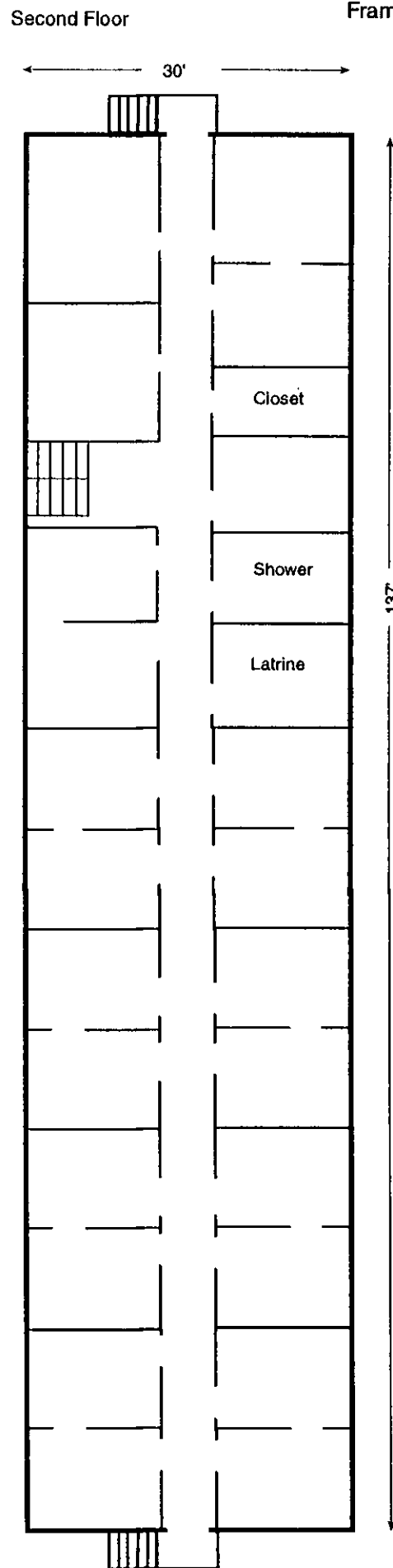
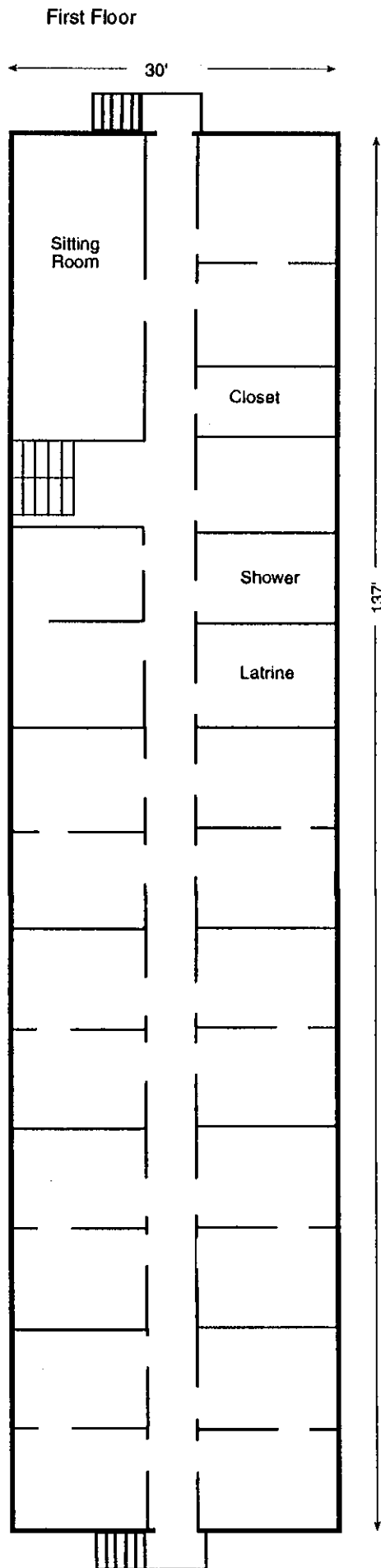
Affiliation: PAR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, INC., Sacramento, California

Date prepared: July 1995

Photography prepared by: David De Vries

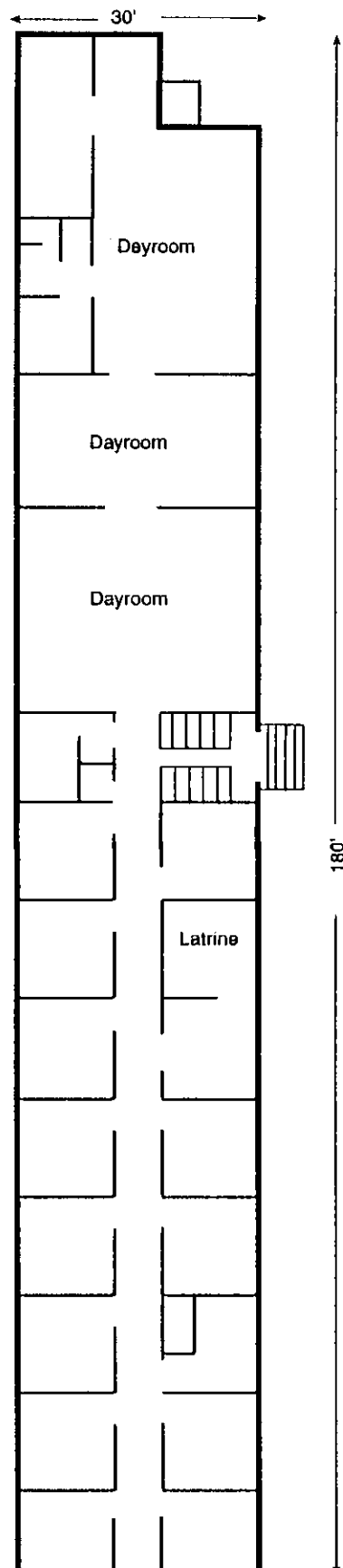
Affiliation: Mesa Technical, Berkeley, California

Date of photographs: May and June 1993

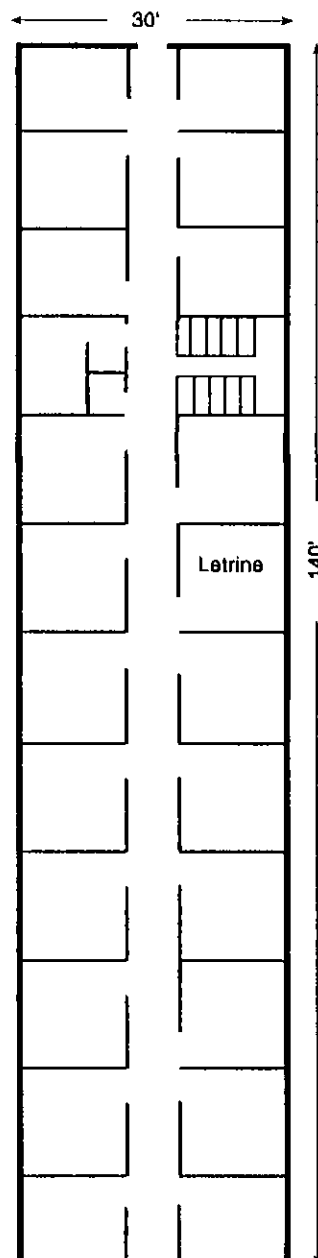


NOTE: Unlabeled rooms
served as living quarters

First Floor



Second Floor



NOTE: Unlabeled rooms served
as living quarters